

OPINION

Stouffville
Sun-Tribune

6290 Main St.
Stouffville, ON. L4A 1G7
www.yorkregion.com

PUBLISHER Ian Proudfoot

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Debora Kelly

BUSINESS MANAGER
Robert Lazaruko

DIRECTOR
INTERACTIVE MEDIA
& **TECHNOLOGY**
John Putney

DIRECTOR, ADVERTISING
& **DISTRIBUTION**
Barry Black

YORK REGION PRINTING
GENERAL MANAGER
Bob Dean

DIRECTOR, CIRCULATION
SYSTEMS
Lynn Pashko

Opinion

Bullies rule with Unsafe Schools Act

Despite the McGuinty government's good intentions to make our schools safe with its Safe Schools Act, some remain places of harassment, terror and trauma for students who are bullied.

And recent amendments to the act appear to do more to protect bullies, rather than their victims.

Just ask Daniel Sebben, who dropped out of his Newmarket high school rather than face another day of being threatened and called derogatory names.

Years of verbal and one physical attack had taken their toll.

He turned on himself, cutting his skin and abusing drugs in a desperate attempt to release the pain bottled up inside since the bullying began in elementary school.

When his family finally learned of the repeated attacks, they turned to the York Region District School Board for help.

He was victimized all over again by the very people who are supposed to ensure he is safe at school.

On one hand, the board put the onus on him to avoid the bullies, while on the other hand, it urged Daniel to confront them in a "restorative meeting".

Education Minister Kathleen Wynne readily admitted to us the legislation doesn't address the needs of victims.

Following consultation with the public, the province took to heart recommendations for change focusing on prevention, progressive discipline, parent and community involvement and programs for suspended and expelled students in Bill 212.

Bullying became a part of the debate, with youth justice advocates arguing students should not be disciplined for conduct that "does not constitute genuine bullying".

Justice for Children and Youth stated, "Not all unkind speeches or actions are bullying. Nor do social preferences indicate bullying. We must, and legislation must distinguish between bullying and expression which may be rude, mean or disrespectful..."

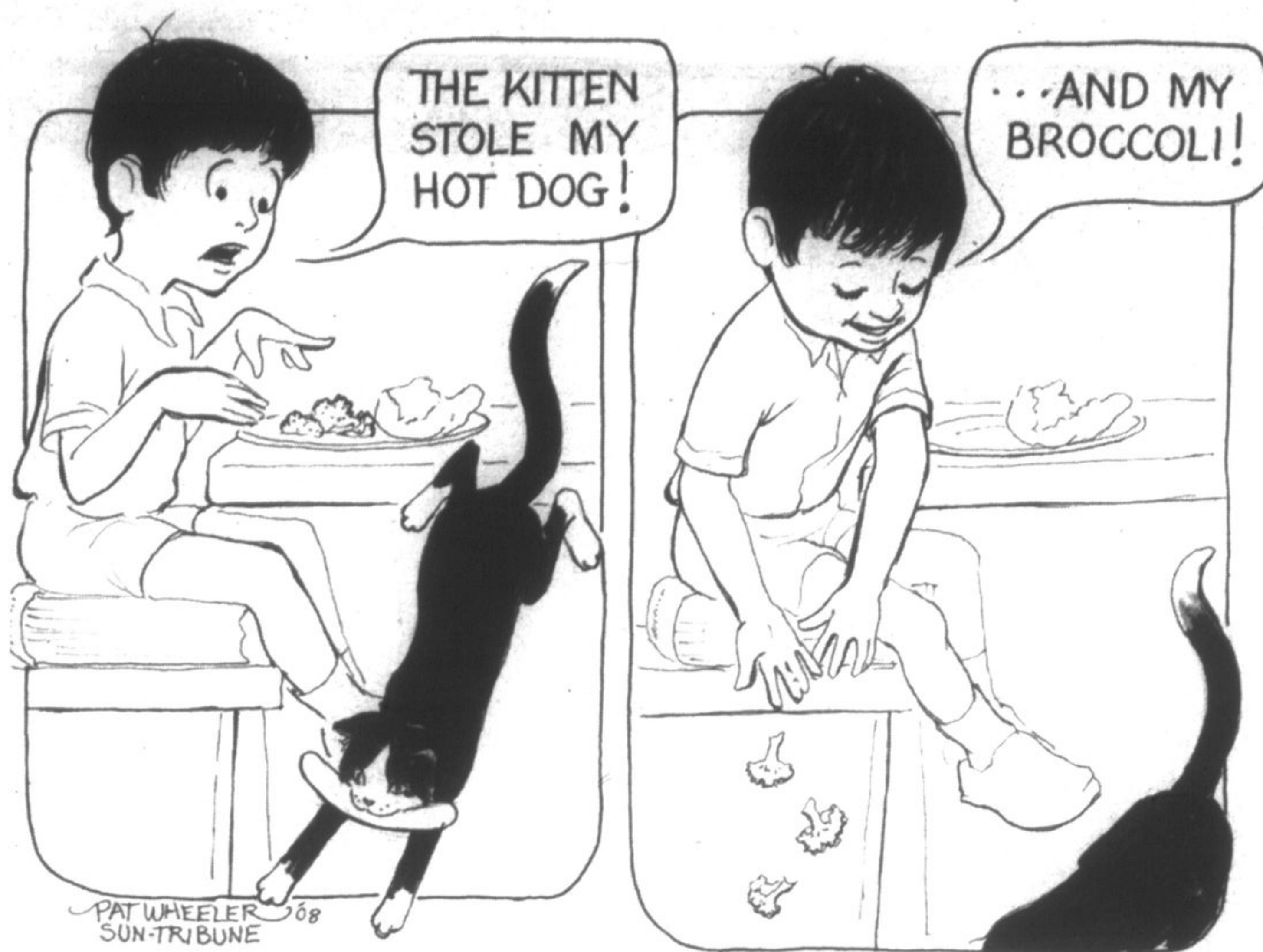
Were Daniel's tormenters simply being mean?

The pendulum has swung too far to the other side, with administrators apparently reluctant not only to take action against bullies, but to even help their victims.

Once again, Ms Wynne said her ministry will review the act this fall.

What's clear is that our schools need to do more to protect and provide legitimate assistance to victims of bullies. The act needs to ensure that focus.

Until then, we're better off calling it the Unsafe Schools Act.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Get in the dog house, where you belong, Stouffville

Sorry, Fido, Rover and Lassie. I like dogs like you, trust me. When you are in your place. And, in most cases, that means not on Main Street during the Saturday of the Strawberry Fest.

The main drag is closed to vehicles. It's a great place to meet and mingle, to run into folks you won't see anywhere else all year.

People look forward to this day all year. They told me so last Saturday, while I volunteered at a booth in the middle of all the action.

When I wasn't observing just how creative we humans can be with the placement of our tattoos (there's another column in there, trust me), I was checking out the dogs.

Big, little. Pulling their masters or being pulled themselves. Chihuahuas and daschunds, to sheep dogs and German shepherds. The United Nations of the canine world, if you will.

And, for the most part, they were obedience-school behaved, but, like kids in class, there are always a few bad actors.

Bottom line? If your dog can be aggressive, don't take him or her into situations that are rife with potential conflict. Like a street wall to wall with humans, golf carts, skateboards and other canines under the late-June sun.

Dogs went at each other, teeth bared. Some yelped wildly. Small children, especially those in strollers at eye level to the canines, reeled back.

Thanks to Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville bylaw control officers for stepping in on some occasions. Two years ago, York Regional Police was involved in at least one dog fight.

And we haven't even touched on the people who subjected man's best friend to the torture treatment Canada Day fireworks must be in the canine kingdom.

Hey, has the death of Courtney Trempe by a dog here 10 years ago been forgotten?

Sadly, yes, by many. Get in the dog house, Stouffville. Jim Mason is editor of *The Sun-Tribune*.

Letters to the Editor

Knock-off guns could lead to tragedy

After stopping in quickly to make a purchase in one of our Stouffville variety stores, I felt compelled to write to you.

Upon approaching the counter, I noticed two guns were for sale behind the counter. They were in a box and each clearly marked 18-and-over.

I questioned why the guns were there and was it really necessary for a local convenience store to be selling them. I was promptly told it was not illegal and I was the only one who didn't like it.

Stores selling cigarettes to individuals who make their own choice to smoke now have to keep them hidden from the public eye, yet anyone of any age can walk in and see these guns for sale, sitting on a shelf, in plain view.

I was chilled to think these guns would end up in someone's hands and end in tragedy.

Do we not have enough problems on our streets with gun violence?

I know these guns cannot be authentic and that's even scarier. I can see the headlines now: "teenager shot by police ... fake gun!"

For your information, I am a non-smoker. I am neither advocating for the right of smokers nor am I necessarily against guns. I am against the ability for anyone to walk in and purchase these items.

It seems that a number of the convenience stores are not there for those 'quick' pick-up items, they're stocked with knock-offs.

Stouffville has had enough tragedy over the years in the loss of young lives. Do we really need to start adding guns into the equation?

VICTORIA CORRIGAN
STOUFFVILLE

Where do our fireworks come from?

Re: Fireworks are in sky artist's blood, June 28.

The Stouffville Canada Day fireworks are always a grand and enthralling display. I attended them many times in my childhood and was lucky to be back for this year's show.

But with my years, so have complex issues arisen and I must speak to this one: Where do the fireworks come from?

I read in Alyshia Higgins' story we had a proud collection from around the world for our July 1 show. Where in the world? Who is producing them?

These are very important factors in firework purchasing because, as has been brought to my awareness recently, there are many firework factories in developing countries that employ very young children.

These children are at great risk from the moment they are sold by their financially desperate families to these companies for a promise of monetary return that is often never shown. These children, aged as young as four, are at a daily risk of explosion and many are killed.

In 1995, Free The Children convinced the City of Toronto to pass a resolution not to purchase fireworks for its events made by children. If the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville has not yet done the same, I'm sure it is possible to do the research and follow the example of our influential neighbour.

The show would be no less extravagant, and our local firework artist's style will not be cramped. Being ethical about our purchases is one more reason to be proud of our local culture.

HELEN DREW
STOUFFVILLE

LETTERS POLICY

The Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

Letters to the Editor,
The Sun-Tribune
6290 Main St.
Stouffville, ON
L4A 1G7
jmason@yrmg.com

EDITORIAL
Editor
Jim Mason
jmason@yrmg.com

INTERACTIVE MEDIA
Marketing & Advertising
Manager
Dawna Andrews
dandrews@yrmg.com

ADVERTISING
Retail Manager
Stacey Allen
sallen@yrmg.com

Classified Manager
Bonnie Rondeau
brondeau@yrmg.com

PRODUCTION
Team Leader
Sherry Day
sday@yrmg.com



EDITORIAL
905-640-2612
Fax: 905-640-8778

ADVERTISING
905-640-2612
Classified: 1-800-743-3353
Fax: 905-640-8778

DISTRIBUTION
905-640-2612



A York Region Media Group community newspaper. The Sun-Tribune, published every Thursday and Saturday, is a division of the Metroland Media Group Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Torstar Corporation. Metroland is comprised of 100 community publications across Ontario. The York Region Newspaper Group includes The Liberal, serving Richmond Hill and Thornhill, Vaughan Citizen, The Era-Banner (Newmarket/Aurora), Markham Economist & Sun, Georgina Advocate, York Region Business Times, North of the City, yorkregion.com and York Region Printing.